

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Official Action dated December 1, 2005. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-8 and 10-12 are under consideration in this application. Claims 1 and 9 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 2-3, 7-8, and 10-12 are being amended, as set forth above and in the attached marked-up presentation of the claim amendments, in order to more particularly define and distinctly claim Applicants' invention.

All the amendments to the claims are supported by the specification. Applicants hereby submit that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

Formality Rejection

The Title of the Invention was objected to as being non-descriptive, and claim 1 was objected to for grammatical errors. As indicated, the specification and the claims are being amended as required by the Examiner. Accordingly, the withdrawal of the outstanding informality rejections is in order, and is therefore respectfully solicited.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 2-6 and 11 would be allowed if rewritten into independent form to include the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. As claims 2-3 and 11 are being rewritten into independent form to include the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims, and claims 4-6 depend from claim 3, claims 2-6 and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Prior Art Rejection

Claims 1 and 7-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 6,738,123 to Takahashi et al. in view of US Patent No. 6,869,664 to Vasoya et al., and claims 9, 10 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over

Takahashi in view of Vasoya, and further in view of US Patent No. 6,021,050 to Ehman et al.. The prior art references cited but not applied against the claimed invention were pertinent to the disclosure of the invention.

As claims 1 and 9 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 7-8, 10 and 12 are being amended to depend from the allowable claims 2-3 and 11, claims 7-8, 10 and 12 are in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

In view of all the above, clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art reference upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely, Applicants respectfully contend that the prior art references cannot anticipate the present invention or render the present invention obvious. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

Stanley P. Fisher
Registration Number 24,344



Juan Carlos A. Marquez
Registration Number 34,072

REED SMITH LLP
3110 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 1400
Falls Church, Virginia 22042
(703) 641-4200
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SPF/JCM/JT